

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L LISBON 327

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ELAB, PINT, PO

SUBJ: LABOR UNITY CONTINUES TO BE MAJOR ISSUE

REF: LISBON 293

SUMMARY: RECENT DEVELOPMENTS INDICATE CONTINUING OPPOSITION TO THE IMPOSITION OF A UNITARY LABOR MOVEMENT BY DECREE. WHILE THE COMMUNISTS AND INTERSINDICAL WILL PROBABLY WIN THE ISSUE, THE VICTORY COULD BE A COSTLY ONE FOR THEM. END SUMMARY

1. THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS WILL CONTINUE ON JANUARY 20 TO DISCUSS THE MUCH-DISPUTED LABOR LAW WHICH WOULD ESTABLISH A UNITARY, LABOR MOVEMENT IN PORTUGAL. WHILE THE TIMING OF THE COUNCIL'S DECISIONS IS STILL UNCERTAIN THE PROBABILITY STILL IS THAT THE DECREE-LAW WILL BE PASSED INASMUCH AS THE COMMUNIST PARTY AND INTERSINDICAL HAVE THE DECLARED SUPPORT OF THE ARMED FORCES MOVEMENT (AFM). ALTHOUGH THE DECREE-LAW WILL BE SENT TO THE COUNCIL OF STATE FOR FURTHER CONSIDERATION FOLLOWING
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THE DECISION OF THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS, THE MILITARY PRE-

DOMINANCE IN THE COUNCIL OF STATE LEAVES NO PROSPECT THAT A COUNCIL OF MINISTERS DECISION FAVORABLE TO A UNITARY LABOR MOVEMENT WOULD BE OVERTURNED. SOCIALIST PARTY GENERAL SECRETARY MARIO SOARES HAS PRIVATELY TOLD THE AMBASSADOR OF HIS CONCERN OVER "COMMUNIST CONTROL OF THE MEDIA," WHICH HE BLAMES FOR PRESENTING ONLY ONE SIDE OF THE LABOR LAW ISSUE. THE SOCIALIST PARTY ISSUED A PRESS STATEMENT JANUARY 19 ATTACKING THE NATIONAL RADIO AND TELEVISION SERVICES FOR THEIR EXTENSIVE COVERAGE AND PROPAGANDA IN FAVOR OF THE INTERSINDICAL DEMONSTRATION ON JANUARY 14, WHILE THAT OF THE SOCIALISTS ON JANUARY 16 WAS PRACTICALLY IGNORED.

2. IN SPITE OF THE FACT THAT THE SOCIALIST PARTY CONCEDES THAT THERE IS LITTLE PROSPECT FOR PREVENTING THE PASSAGE OF THE LAW THERE ARE A NUMBER OF RECENT DEVELOPMENTS INDICATING THAT THE ISSUE IS CONTINUING TO POLARIZE THE PUBLIC.

(A), MOST IMPORTANT OF THESE EVENTS IS THE DEFEAT IN THE BANK WORKERS' UNION OF OPORTO (WHICH INCLUDES BANK EMPLOYEES FROM MOST OF NORTHERN PORTUGAL) OF A SLATE HEADED BY FORMER MINISTER OF LABOR AVELINO GONCALVES, A COMMUNIST, BY A LIST HEADED BY ALBERTO DA SILVA ANDRADE, A SOCIALIST, BY A VOTE OF 4,063 TO 2,162. ALTHOUGH SOCIALISTS ARE TAKING JUSTIFIABLE SATISFACTION OVER THIS VICTORY IN A UNION LONG CONSIDERED TO BE DOMINATED BY COMMUNISTS, SIGNIFICANCE OF VOTE MUDDIED SOMEWHAT BY EXISTENCE OF PERSONALIST FACTIONS AND RIVALRIES WITHIN UNION, WHICH ARE ALSO BELIEVED TO HAVE PLAYED A MAJOR PART IN THE OUTCOME.

(B) IN A CLOSELY CONTESTED ELECTION IN THE GOVERNMENT POSTAL, TELEGRAPH, AND TELEPHONE UNION, THE LIST LESS FAVORABLE TO A UNIFIED LABOR MOVEMENT REPORTEDLY HAS THE WINNING EDGE.

(C). THE BISHOPS OF PORTUGAL, MEETING IN EPISCOPAL COUNCIL, ISSUED ON JANUARY 17 A FIRMLY WORDED DECLARATION IN FAVOR OF TRADE UNION LIBERTY. THIS IS ONLY THE SECOND TIME IN THE PAST MONTHS THAT THE CHURCH HAS MADE A PRONOUNCEMENT ON A POLITICAL ISSUE.

(D). THE COMMUNIST PARTY HAS REJECTED A CALL BY PPD GENERAL SECRETARY SA CARNEIRO FOR A NATIONAL PLEBISCITE ON THE ISSUE.
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THIS DOES NOT STRENGTHEN PCP CLAIMS OF OVERWHELMING WORKER SUPPORT FOR A UNIFIED LABOR MOVEMENT. THE ECONOMIC STUDY GROUP SEDES HAS DECLARED AGAINST THE PROJECT AS WELL AS OTHER LESS INFLUENTIAL GROUPS.

3. COMMENT: THE COMMUNISTS AND INTERSINDICAL MAY FIND THAT GETTING THEIR WAY ON THIS ISSUE COULD COST THEM IN TERMS OF DESTROYING THEIR CAREFULLY CULTIVATED IMAGE OF REASONABLENESS.

THERE HAS ALREADY BEEN A NOTICEABLE COALESCING OF DIVERSE ELEMENTS
IN OPPOSITION TO COMMUNIST DOMINANCE OF THE LABOR MOVEMENT. AT
MINIMUM FACADE OF COALITION UNITY HAS CRACKED WIDE OPEN.
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